

The article below was written by the editorial staff of *The Oregonian* after a presentation to their Editorial Board by Oregon Mentors.

## The Oregonian

### Go ahead: Burnish your legacy

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As people add silver hairs to their heads, they often add golden daydreams to their lives. Time is short, and they suddenly yearn, Walter Mitty-style, to make a mark on the world. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be a philanthropist, to be influential – to be remembered?

But darn it if there aren't always a few insurmountable hurdles to overcome. Such as: Not winning the lottery again this year. Rats, we probably won't find ourselves handing out checks for \$1 million anytime soon, cutting the ribbon on a shiny new hospital wing (“Oh no, no need to mention my name!”) or guaranteeing every child in a Portland grade school the moon-shot of a college scholarship.

So here's the next best thing: Become a mentor – an adult guide – for a young Oregonian. Don't stand back and daydream. Just do it.

The need is profound. The Oregon Mentoring Initiative, a clearinghouse that helps match mentors with 110 programs that need them, has already identified 7,500 Oregon kids who need mentors right away. Tomorrow. But the need in the state goes much deeper. As the initiative says in its brochure, “We support mentoring for 944,000 different reasons – each one a young Oregonian with a name, a face and the potential to do a lot of good for our state.”

The commitment is relatively small – an hour a week for nine months. But let's not kid ourselves: You are likely to get hooked. You are likely to love this wonderful, low-key way of connecting to someone and influencing his or her life forever.

You may not want to stop after nine months – but even nine months is enough time to take a child through a pivotal point, help him learn to read, help her stay in school, help them figure out some sort of career direction.

We shouldn't kid you about one other thing, either. No doubt you've got this all figured out, how much fun it will be to be a Wise Man or a Wise Woman. But it may not exactly work out that way. Most people who try mentoring consider it a mutually beneficial arrangement. The wisdom flows in both directions.

The Oregon Mentoring Initiative is an impressive outfit, we might add. They've only been around for about a year, and they've gone from zero to 60 mph in a short time. They're enlisting corporate involvement in mentoring, adding a kind of quality control, and treating it almost as a franchise, to ensure both that mentors and “mentees” have a good experience.

The explosion of interest in volunteerism hasn't translated, sadly, to the kind of slow, steady volunteerism that builds relationships. The Oregon Mentoring Initiative is aiming to fill that gap. You can contact them at 503-450-0890 or look them up on the Web at [www.ormentor.org](http://www.ormentor.org).

Did we say mentoring was the next best thing to being rich and famous? We lied. If you are afflicted with the urgent, heartfelt wish to leave your name inscribed somewhere in this universe – other than on your headstone, that is – inscribing your name in the life of a young person is the very best way to go.

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